



STEELE REALTY CONSULTANTS
INTERNATIONAL

April 13, 2021

Representative Marvin L. Abney
Chairman
House Committee on Finance

RE: Article 16, Section 6 - Relating to Housing

Dear Chairman Abney and Committee Members:

Please accept my appreciation for the opportunity given by this committee to share my expertise regarding the proposed state conveyance tax increase currently under consideration. As a longtime professional in the real estate community, I have owned and operated a real estate consulting firm here in Rhode Island for over 12 years.

Property taxes in all their forms are an ongoing conversation in my office and amongst our clientele. Disparities in housing options within our community, and the near total lack of affordable options for the many has also been a longstanding focus and passion of mine. I have been an advocate for the creation of a dedicated revenue stream for affordable housing for a couple years now. As the committee is likely already aware, our fellow New England States have all established dedicated revenue streams to fund affordable housing needs.

The Governor's awareness of the pressing needs in our State to address our affordable housing deficit and his good intent behind the proposed conveyance tax increase is acknowledged. I only take pause with his seemingly arbitrary conveyance increase, pursued in the absence of mindful and sustainable policy change. A much less indiscriminate means of executing his good intent would be to simply **dedicate a more substantial percentage of our current transfer tax revenue for affordable housing prior to considering the creation of a new tax burden on selective home sellers. To this end, I would encourage the support of House Bill 5456.**

A closer look at successful policies in place in other states could encourage a more productive dialogue pertaining to this matter. Upon my own cursory examination of other methodologies surrounding conveyance taxes elsewhere, I found that varied and interesting approaches have been taken. For example, some states enable but give autonomy to their municipalities to determine their portion of conveyance fees. Other states offer reduced rates to sellers of low to moderate income housing or to senior citizens or the disabled.

One notable absence in all other 50 states policies was the arbitrary exclusion of commercial property transactions in higher tax burden demands.

Thank you for your consideration and for allowing me an opportunity to provide my opinion on this matter. I respectfully request that this letter be entered into the record and forwarded to all members of this committee.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rita Steele', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rita Danielle Steele, Esq.
Principal Broker Owner
Steele Realty Consultants LLC